



The title is presented in a highly decorative, three-tiered format. The top tier features the word "BIRTHRIGHT" in a serif font, with the initial "B" being significantly larger and enclosed in a decorative frame. The middle tier contains the words "of GOD'S" in a similar serif font, with "of" in a smaller, lowercase script. The bottom tier displays the word "CHILDREN." in a large, bold serif font. The entire text is set against a background of ornate, symmetrical flourishes that include a sunburst at the top, wings or branches in the middle, and a small cross-like symbol at the bottom. The design is rendered in a gold or brass color, contrasting with the deep red leather of the book cover.

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of GOD'S
CHILDREN.

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HOLINESS

THE BIRTHRIGHT

OF

ALL GOD'S CHILDREN.

Matthew
Overbury
By Rev. J. T. CRANE, D.D.,
"OF THE NEWARK CONFERENCE."

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.—1 John iii, 9.

NEW YORK: A
NELSON & PHILLIPS.
CINCINNATI: HITCHCOCK & WALDEN.
1874.



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P R E F A C E.

CHRISTIAN THOROUGHNESS, or completeness, is a subject which deeply interests all who believe God's word and desire to walk in its light. Around the subject are questions which we cannot evade, if we would, either in our own thinking, or in converse with other minds. Some of these the writer has been led to examine, as he had opportunity; and in regard to them has reached conclusions which are, at least to him, more restful than the previous uncertainties.

It might possibly be appropriate for me to apologize for so brief an utterance on so great a theme. It would in no wise be difficult to make a larger book. The subject is vital and

attractive ; and it touches the Christian system at so many points, both doctrinal and experimental, that wide fields of thought open in every direction. Still, the aim of the author has been not to enter every inviting avenue of research, but to point out what seems to him a plain path, in which all who love the Lord Jesus Christ may walk in harmony ; and that a greater number of readers may be reached, brevity, rather than amplitude, has been made the rule of the discussion. It will be easy to enlarge the plan at any future time, if need be

This little volume is placed in the hands of the Christian reader with the earnest desire that it may, if possible, help him to value his Birthright still more highly, hold it by faith with firmer grasp, and press on, more eagerly than ever, to the attainment of the most exalted privileges which it places within his reach.

J. T. C.

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, *Feb.*, 1874.



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HOLINESS

THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL GOD'S CHILDREN.



CHAPTER I.

THE NEW LIFE AND ITS PROBLEMS.

THE great doctrine of the Scriptures, of the Reformation, and the evangelical Christianity of our own day, is Salvation by Faith. The apostolic commission is, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* It is true, something must precede the act of faith. The sinner must

consider his ways, and realize in some degree his guilt and danger. He must yield to his convictions, be willing to forsake sin, and live a life of all obedience to divine law, and joyfully consent to be saved by grace alone. He that thus feels his guilt, and with a penitent, broken heart comes to Christ, abandoning every other refuge, and trusting in him for pardon, peace, and all else he needs, shall be saved. No matter how numerous, or how aggravated his sins, he shall be saved. Nay, he that thus repents and believes is saved. Saul, who three days before was a fierce persecutor, breathing threatenings and slaughter against God's people, and *exceedingly mad against them*, believes, and in that same moment is saved. The jailer at Philippi who, an hour be-

fore, drew his sword with the intention of plunging it into his own heart, believes and is saved. Thus the Gospel of Christ is *the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*

But in what sense is the penitent believer thus saved? The infinite gift is instantaneous. He that believeth not is condemned; he that believeth is saved; and whether man can detect it or not, there is a point of time when the penitent passes from unbelief to belief, from death unto life. His condition, up to that moment, is one of inexpressible evil. He is guilty, condemned, corrupt, helpless, the wrath of God resting on him, and hell waiting his coming, with its eternal darkness and despair. Saved by faith, he attains a state inexpressibly exalted. He escapes from wrath; for

there is *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus*. He no longer trembles in view of his peril, for he can say, *O, Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away*. He is no longer an alien from God, but a child, an heir: and *the spirit itself beareth witness of the new and exalted relation which he now sustains to the King of kings and the Lord of lords*. So great a transformation has been wrought that it is called a new birth, and he is said to be *born again, born from above, born of God*. Because he is in Christ, he is declared to be a *new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ*. The children of God are said to be a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Thus the divine word describes the great transition.

In regard to the relation which the penitent believer sustains to God there is little room for controversy. He is a child of God and an heir of heaven. Living, the divine smile is upon him; dying, he goes to be forever with the Lord. Living or dying, he is the Lord's. But while he is yet on earth, there are promises and exhortations in regard to the new life within him which may well arrest his attention, and fill his soul with lofty aspirations. He is urged not to rest content with the beginnings of the

Christian life, but to *go on unto perfection, to grow up into Christ in all things*, and from a *child* become a *man*; and having Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, and *being rooted and grounded in love, to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height*; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God. To all who are born of God it is said, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* These expressions certainly point to things beyond, to possibilities of attainment which are in advance of all that the beginner has yet known. What, then, are these possibilities of the new life? To those who are entering the promised realm of rest, it would seem that *there remaineth yet very*

much land to be possessed. Where lies the goodly heritage? Where is the way by which we shall go up? What enemies beset the path, and with what weapons shall we fight them? By what token shall we know when we begin to tread its richest soil?

The Methodist Churches, both in England and America, hold, and have always held, the doctrine of Christian Perfection. The Methodist Episcopal Church has never faltered in its advocacy. Our standard theological works teach it, and scarcely a year passes without some new publication on the subject. Before a minister can be received into Conference membership he is called upon to answer, before God and his brethren—and is expected to answer in the affirmative, too—these three questions: “Are you

going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life? Are you groaning after it?" We answer these questions affirmatively, and think that we are sincere; but how few feel assured that they have gained the gracious state? Hardly one in twenty of our ministers professes it, either publicly or privately, so far as I can learn. We preach it occasionally; but among our people its confessors are still fewer, in proportion to numbers, than in the ministry. Even among our bishops, from 1784 to the present day, confessors are as hard to find as in any other class of our people. The very princes of our Israel have been silent in regard to their own experience of it. The apostolic Wesley never professed it. In the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the forty-

second of his ministry, he published, in one of the leading journals of London, a letter containing these words: "I have told all the world *I am not perfect*; I have not *attained* the character I draw." Bishop Asbury, who, if possible, exceeded Wesley in the toils and sufferings of his faithful ministry, did not profess it. The saintly Hedding, approaching the grave by lingering disease, always calm, and often joyous in view of death, was importuned to profess it, and declined. Myriads of men and women among us, whose lives were bright with holy light, saints *of whom the world was not worthy*, never professed it. A few have done it in the past, a few do it at the present time; but we cannot hide the fact that they are very few, compared with the multitudes who do not.

And why are they so few? Such a state of things, on so vital a point, and one to which attention has been called so often and so earnestly, must have a cause of corresponding magnitude. The Church, as a body, is indeed living at a lower level than it ought; but when was it otherwise? The twelve, chosen by Christ himself, had a Judas among them. The general Church was no purer in apostolic times than it is among us at the present day. In our own branch of it, so far as I can learn, gross offenses against the laws of morality occur less frequently than in former times. Our people, the poor in their poverty as well as the rich in their abundance, never gave of their substance so freely for all good purposes as now. Where is the missionary-field which has been aban-

doned because none could be found to face its perils? Our oldest and most observant ministers tell us that former times were no better than these. No; it is not because the Church has fallen from her steadfastness. Planted as she is by *the rivers of waters*, she ought to have stretched up into loftier stature, and spread abroad a richer crown of foliage; still, the blight and the mildew are not upon her. Boasting is excluded; but we are not yet called to hang our harps upon the willows, and mourn over the waste places of our Zion. Why, then, has this doctrine so small a place in the preaching of the ministry, and the experience of both ministry and people?



CHAPTER II.

WESLEY'S SEARCH AFTER TRUTH.

THE problem is not easily solved. It is not probable that any one mind can solve it to the satisfaction of all others. This, however, need not deter the humblest lover of Zion from uttering his opinion. On the contrary, it lays upon him an increasing obligation to do it. The thought which he utters, even if it be not the truth for which search is made, may suggest the truth to some more fortunate explorer, just as certain rocks, of little value in themselves, guide the geologist to the veins of treasure beneath.

I am persuaded that the piety of the Church has suffered loss, and serious

injury has been done, by inaccurate representations of precious truths. This will, perhaps, be best shown by a somewhat extended sketch of the doctrine of Christian Perfection, as taught among the Methodists.

Mr. Wesley, in a letter written long afterward, tells us that early in his religious life he "began to see that Christians are called to love God with all their heart, and serve him with all their strength, which," he adds, "is precisely what I apprehend to be meant by the scriptural term perfection. After weighing this for some years, I openly declared my sentiments before the University in the sermon on the 'Circumcision of the Heart.' About six years after, in consequence of an advice I received from Bishop Gibson, 'Tell all the world what

you mean by perfection,' I published my coolest and latest thoughts in a sermon on that subject."

Here, then, we have the distinct statement that what Mr. Wesley, at least as late as the year 1756, the date of the letter alluded to, believed in regard to Christian Perfection, he advanced in the sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart," in 1733, and repeated, perhaps more accurately, in the sermon on "Christian Perfection," in 1740. In the first sermon he preaches the doctrine that "the distinguishing mark of a true follower of Christ, of one who is in a state of acceptance with God," is a "circumcision of the heart," "which," he proceeds to say, "is that habitual disposition of soul which in the sacred writings is termed Holiness, and which directly implies the being

cleansed from sin; from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit." It will be observed that he gives this exalted description, not of the mature Christian, but of the Christian who is "in a state of acceptance with God;" and he expressly repels the claims of all others to be Christians.

Six years or so afterward, as he tells us, seeing that his views had been misunderstood and misrepresented, he published the sermon on "Christian Perfection," which was designed to be a full and accurate statement in regard to the transformations which grace works in the heart of the true believer. This statement he styles, in 1756, "his coolest and latest thoughts" on the subject of Christian Perfection. What, then, were the fixed opinions of John Wesley on this

important subject in 1756, twenty-three years after the sermon before the University, and only five or six years before the great agitation in regard to Holiness which forms so remarkable an era in the early history of Wesleyan Methodism?

In this sermon Mr. Wesley first shows in what sense Christians are not perfect. They are not free from ignorance, nor from the mistakes which originate in ignorance; nor from infirmities; nor from temptations; but there is not one word in this part of the sermon in regard to the removal of the remains of the sinful nature, no allusion to any residue of depravity left in the soul in the hour when it is born of God.

In the second part of the discourse, in which Mr. Wesley shows in what sense he holds that Christians may be perfect,

he devotes six and a half pages, exactly one half of the sermon, to a definition of what he terms "the glorious privilege of every Christian ; yea, though he be but a *babe* in Christ." And what is this glorious privilege? In Mr. Wesley's own words it is to be "so far perfect as not to commit sin." This conclusion, he declares, is "in conformity to the whole tenor of the New Testament." Arguing the point at length, adducing the passages of Scripture which he deems proof of the doctrine, and explaining those which might appear to be against it, he reaches the deliberate conclusion that whosoever is born of God is so far perfect as not to commit sin.

What, then, is the additional grace, the distinguishing characteristic, of "the perfect man," who has grown up to *the*

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? It would seem that Mr. Wesley has placed the state of the babe in Christ so high that it must be hard to point out differences between the two; to show the practical advantages of the perfect Christian, without depreciating those of the soul just born of God. He did find a real difficulty in drawing the line, and especially in maintaining it, clearly and distinctly, in the minds of his people.

In this sermon he says that the mature Christian is "so far perfect as to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." He admits that the perfect man has temptations of various kinds, but says that he overcomes them. But this is exactly the same thing which he affirms of the babe in Christ. Both are subject to tempta-

tions, and both have the victory, and sin not. The only real distinction affecting the question of practical obedience to God is, therefore, a theoretical one. He assumes that the babe in Christ has still an evil nature, a source of temptation within, from which the mature Christian is delivered. The perfect man can say with Paul : "*I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" "Words," he adds, that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin."

But if both the babe in Christ and the perfect man are assaulted by temptations and overcome them, and are free from sin, what matters it whence the temptations come? What advantage has the mature over the beginner in the matter of practical obedience?

Wesley himself manifestly fails to maintain his theoretical distinctions in regard to the two classes of Christians. In his sermon on the "New Birth" he defines it to be "that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is created anew in Christ Jesus; when it is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned

into the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

Here the state of every one born of God is portrayed in such exalted terms as to make it difficult to describe any higher state of grace.

Again, in his sermon on "Patience," published in 1785, he describes the new birth in these glowing words: "There is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed to the love of the Creator; the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, are, in that instant, changed by the mighty power of God. The whirlwind of our will is stopped in its mid career, and sinks down into the will of God.

Pride and haughtiness subside into lowliness of heart ; as does anger, with all turbulent and unruly passions, into calmness, meekness, and gentleness."

In the earlier part of Mr. Wesley's ministry, he said comparatively little in regard to Christian perfection. The burden of his sermons was sin, the atonement, salvation by faith, Christian duty, and the exalted privileges of all who are born of God. Still, he saw the term Perfection in the Scripture, and believed a state of grace to be designated thereby which is attainable and desirable. He seems, however, to have believed that it was the result of growth, and of long and faithful service ; and that few attain it till a little before they leave the world. Thus, in his sermon on the "New Birth," he says that "it is undeniably true" that

sanctification is "a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God."

At the Conference of 1745 the subject was considered, and the following conclusions reached; that although sanctification is not ordinarily attained till a little before death, and Paul himself was not sanctified when he wrote his first epistles, we ought to expect it sooner. It was agreed that sanctification should scarcely be preached at all to those who are not pressing forward; and when it is preached, it should always be done by way of promise—by drawing rather than driving. In regard to the way in which this religious state should be sought, it was decided that "the *general* means which God has ordained for our

receiving his sanctifying grace are, keeping all his commandments, denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily; and that the *particular* are prayer, searching the Scriptures, fasting," and partaking of the Lord's Supper. This was the way, and the only way, which Wesley and his preachers at that time felt at liberty to recommend.

About this same date Mr. Wesley found several members of his societies who professed to have attained Christian Perfection. In 1744 he conversed with two persons in London who said that they were "saved from all sin." It is very clear that he was at a loss what to think of the experience which they related. He writes: "Why do I not rejoice and praise God" in behalf of such? "Perhaps because I have an exceedingly

complex idea of sanctification, or a sanctified man." He concludes, however, that whether they are saved from all sin or not, it is right to rejoice in every evidence of their true piety. The next year, 1745, he met two or three at Bristol, and two or three more at Kingswood, who made the same profession.

At the Conference of 1747 the question was again discussed, and the conclusion was formally recorded that the inspired writers rarely either address or mention those who are entirely sanctified; and therefore it behooves the ministry, in public, at least, rarely to speak in full and explicit terms concerning entire sanctification. All this shows that Wesley's opinions on the subject were up to this date exceedingly indefinite, if not perplexed.



CHAPTER III.

A NEW DEPARTURE, AND NEW QUESTIONS.

✓ **I**T is not given to any one man to *discover* all truth. One lays the foundation, others build upon it. One man, like the Genoese explorer, guided by a half truth, commits himself to unknown seas, and discovers a new continent ; but years elapse, and the aid of other busy minds is invoked, before the outlines of the new world are traced, and its dimensions known. Wesley's contributions to the practical religious thought of the age are invaluable. The doctrinal system which he taught is steadily gaining ground in all directions, and the indica-

tions seem to be that it will ultimately become the faith of the general Church. Still, amid the incessant toils of his ministry he could not be expected to complete all that he began. Moreover, fearless as he was in the search after truth, he was also conservative, and relinquished an old opinion with great reluctance, especially if he found it incorporated in the teachings of the Church of England.

Taking all these things into consideration, it is not matter of surprise to find that Mr. Wesley's views of Christian Perfection were not well defined at the beginning, nor even at the end; and that his various utterances, scattered, as they are, over a space of fifty years, furnish no complete and consistent theory on the subject. He evidently began with-

out a theory, without any labored attempt to show the place which Christian Perfection holds in the Christian system, or to trace its outlines with accuracy. He said, in 1756, that in his sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart," preached before the University in 1733, is contained all that he ever taught in regard to the doctrine of Perfection; but he predicates the character which he describes of every "true follower of Christ," every one "in a state of acceptance with God." It seems not to have occurred to his mind at that time, what he was understood afterward to teach, that the state of grace which he thus describes belongs only to mature Christians, and that the great mass of the true followers of Christ are far below this standard.

After a time he began to feel the necessity of recognizing St. John's distinction between "little children" and "fathers"—the babe in Christ and the mature Christian; and then he employed the term Perfection to designate the attainments of the mature Christian only. The sermon on the "Circumcision of the Heart" gives no hint of two distinct classes of true believers. Mr. Wesley saw the necessity of greater accuracy of statement, and therefore, in 1740, in the sermon on "Christian Perfection," sought to draw the line. He still held that the babe in Christ is "so far perfect as not to commit sin;" but represents the "perfect man" as occupying a higher position, in that he is delivered from "evil thoughts and evil tempers." But even in this very sermon, he ever and anon

forgets the line which he is trying to draw, declaring that "every one that hath Christ in him the hope of glory, purifieth himself even as he is pure," and stating, as the conclusion of all his reasonings, that "*Christians* are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." He admits, however, that "they may have thoughts of evil," and may also feel anger, though not "in the common sense of that word." At this period, and for years afterward, Mr. Wesley's idea of Perfection seems to have been that it is the maturity of the Christian graces, the result of growth, the fruit of long and faithful service.

But it was an age of controversy; and

soon Wesley found his doctrine assailed from various quarters. His devoted friend, the famous Whitefield, wrote to tell him how sorry he was to hear that Mr. Wesley was teaching that a "sinless perfection" is attainable in this life. "There must be," said he, "some Amalekites left in the Israelite's land to keep his soul in action, to keep him humble, and to drive him continually to Jesus Christ for pardon." Wesley, doubtless, smiled at the absurd idea of sin's being a remedy for sin; but an argument from another quarter could not be disposed of with a smile. He was strongly attached to the Church of England, and open and emphatic in his declaration of loyalty to it. And the Ninth of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion declares that "Original Sin is the corruption of the nature of

every man ;” “and this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated.” In adjusting his teachings to the doctrine of this Ninth Article, he was under the necessity of admitting that at least something of the old corruption of nature may remain in those who are “born of God,” and who are “so far perfect as not to commit sin.”

No sooner was this conclusion clearly apprehended than it gave rise to questions which could not fail deeply to interest all who were hungering and thirsting for righteousness. How long must this “infection of nature” remain in the soul? Must we contend with this inward foe all our lives? The article quoted does not answer these questions; and Wesley, on the basis of certain passages of Scripture, concluded that although

the great majority of Christians are not saved from it "till a little before death," and even "Paul was not when he wrote his first epistles," yet no such limitation exists, either in the Scriptures or in practical Christian experience; and complete holiness of the inner nature as well as of action may be attained and enjoyed in this life. Here was, at last, something on which to found a clear distinction between the two classes of believers; and the babe in Christ was described as one in whom "inborn sin" was not yet wholly destroyed; while the "perfect man in Christ Jesus" was entirely freed from it.

But the instant this conclusion is reached it becomes the starting-point of new questions. Is deliverance from "the seeds of sin" desirable? Most assuredly. What, then, are the condi-

tions of success in seeking this grace? What states of mind must precede? Do we grow into it by patient obedience, or seize it at once by an act of faith? What evidences accompany the grace when attained? It was impossible to evade these questions. He who teaches that depravity remains even in the regenerate soul, but that he may be freed from it, and that freedom from it is of priceless value, must tell how deliverance is to be secured. Thus, little by little, the theory of a second distinct work grew up, and assumed what I cannot but regard as an unscriptural form.

It began to be taught, first, that the conviction of remaining depravity must precede entire sanctification, just as conviction for sin precedes justification. Thus Wesley, in his sermon on "Patience,"

says that the true believer grows in holiness as he grows in faith, "till it pleases God, after he is thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature, to take it all away." Vol. ii, p. 222. It was taught, secondly, that this great grace is to be sought by faith, and is attainable at any moment. Thus Wesley, in 1785, wrote to Rev. Freeborn Garrettson: "The more explicitly and strongly you press all believers to aspire after full salvation, as attainable now by simple faith, the more the whole work of God will prosper." Wesley declared, thirdly, that the one who is entirely sanctified may have "the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification as clearly as his justification;" and that, in fact, no one ought to profess it till he has this divine witness. Thus the

mode of representing the doctrine became logically complete.

It is clear that these three points were new to Wesley himself, and were not taught by him until many years after he began his ministry. The sermon on the Circumcision of the Heart shows no trace of them; nor does the sermon on Christian Perfection. Dr. Whitehead, the biographer of Wesley, says: "Though Mr. Wesley had so long held the doctrine of Christian Perfection, he had not always held that this state of mind might be attained in one moment; much less that a person might attain it in his novitiate; nor do I know that there were any professors of it before 1760, except when death was approaching." He also says that "the manner in which it was now preached, pressing the people to expect

what was called the destruction of the root of sin, in one moment, was most certainly new. I can find no trace of it before the period at which I have fixed its introduction." In point of time, then, the general inculcation of these new ideas on the subject of Perfection agrees with the occurrence of the singular events which we shall soon narrate.

But we must confess that to the last Mr. Wesley's methods of stating and enforcing the doctrine were indefinite. Some things would seem to indicate that in the latter part of his life he was disposed to abandon the residue theory. When he prepared, in 1784, the Articles of Religion, which he wished the American Methodist Church to adopt, he copied the first part of the Ninth Article of the Church of England, but rejected

the latter part, which declares that the "infection of nature" remains in the regenerate.

The next year, 1785, only six years before his death, he published his sermon on "Perfection," which, therefore, may be regarded as his final judgment on that subject. And in this sermon he says not a word about "inbred sin" or "the seeds of sin" in believers. He defines perfection, negatively, to be salvation from all sin. But he says in this very sermon, in two different places, emphasizing the words by the use of italics, that by "sin" he means "*a voluntary transgression of a known law.*" This he calls "my sense of the word," "which I apprehend to be the scriptural definition of it." Defined positively, Perfection is explained to be the maturity of the

Christian graces, the completeness of the Christian character. This he regards as the best part of the work wrought, saying that salvation from all sin is "only the least, the lowest branch of it." Thus he resolves Christian Perfection into two elements, to wit, freedom from transgression, and the maturity of the Christian graces. This looks like an abandonment of all former views in regard to the inner work wrought; and we should so construe it, were it not for the utterances in the sermon on "Patience," already quoted, which belongs to the same date, 1785.



CHAPTER IV.

A SAD AND SINGULAR HISTORY.

ABOUT the year 1758 some of the preachers began to give Christian Perfection a more prominent place in their sermons, and now and then, it would seem, depreciated justification and its concomitants in order to exalt sanctification. One was accused of saying that all who are not entirely sanctified are under the curse of God; another, that if any one dies before he has attained perfection he surely perishes. These errors Wesley deemed it expedient to repudiate in a published letter, and also in the Conference Minutes.

The subject was canvassed in the conference of that year, and the result was two conclusions: 1. That "those who think they have attained" that state of grace should speak of it "with great wariness." 2. That young preachers, especially, should not speak in public of perfection "too minutely or circumstantially, but rather in general and scriptural terms." Most young men, thus admonished by the highest ecclesiastical authority to which they are subject, would hardly deem it prudent for them to attempt the subject at all.

In 1761 an agitation began in regard to Christian Perfection and swept through the societies like a mighty wave of the ocean. In the beginning it seemed to promise great good; but the ebb of the tide was as sudden and overwhelming as

the flow, and the result disastrous. Why was the work unsound, and the effect bad? I cannot resist the conviction that it was because it was based upon unsound principles. It is certain that about this time there was a change in the modes of explaining and enforcing the doctrine.

The Conference of 1745 defined the means of attaining Christian Perfection to be earnest obedience to all God's commandments, and the diligent use of all the appointed means of grace. Now the idea began to prevail that entire sanctification, or Christian Perfection, can be attained at once by an act of faith at any time, not only by the veteran who has long been growing and ripening in the graces of the spirit, but by the convert of yesterday. The doctrine

began to be preached, as we have seen, that before the regenerate man can be made altogether holy he must be "thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature;" that it is the privilege of those who are entirely sanctified to have the testimony of the spirit, witnessing their entire sanctification as clearly as their justification; and that none ought to profess it till they have this divine evidence. That these last-named features of the doctrine are scriptural I see no proof; but whether true or erroneous, they are evidently exceedingly liable to abuse. They were generally preached, however, and a general agitation followed. During the year 1759, and for two or three years succeeding, great attention was paid to the doctrine of Perfection, and the pro-

fessors of this state of grace were numerous beyond all former example. In fact, the profession up to this time had been almost unknown. Wesley, as we have seen, conversed in 1744 with two persons who professed to be saved from all sin ; but he evidently was at a loss in regard to the value to be attached to their experience, whether to consider it real or imaginary. Now, professors were numbered by hundreds and thousands, and were found, not only in London, Bristol, and other large cities, but in the remotest parts of the work. Mr. Wesley went to London to examine the matter for himself, and found, as he says, "six hundred and fifty-two members who were exceedingly clear in their experience, and whose testimony he could see no reason to doubt." The societies in that city num-

bered, in 1762, twenty-three hundred and fifty members.

But soon roots of bitterness appeared, George Bell, who had professed conversion three years before, professed entire sanctification in March, 1761, and immediately began to hold independent meetings, in his own way declaring that no one could teach the sanctified except those who were themselves in that state of grace ; and that God was to be found only among these his saints. Thomas Maxfield, one of Wesley's first preachers, and for a time one of the best, adopted the same views and helped on the mischief. Wesley went to see him, and even attended some of his meetings ; he wrote to Bell warning him not to depreciate justification as he had been doing, and then tried with rare patience and

forbearance to avert disaster, but in vain. Bell at last turned prophet, and declared that the world would come to an end on the 28th of February, 1763. Wesley felt compelled to forbid his exhibiting his vagaries in the meetings of the Wesleyan societies. Then came rupture and wreck. Maxfield and Bell formed a new society of their peculiar followers, and denounced Wesley as one incapable of teaching them anything. One of the seceders called him a hypocrite; another accused him of being an enemy of the doctrine of Holiness; a third heard him preach, and then said that if the devil had been in the pulpit he would not have preached such a sermon. Still, large numbers of those who professed sanctification remained faithful, and, for a time at least, were not moved from

their steadfastness. Maxfield carried off about two hundred members of the London society, founded an independent congregation and continued to minister to them for twenty years, and then died. Bell, when his prophecies in regard to the end of the world were proved false, not only gave up the office of prophet, but abandoned all pretense of religion, went into politics, and died an infidel.

Meanwhile Wesley was laboring earnestly and patiently to save all he could from the delusion. The great mass of his people, both preachers and members, were still steadfast in their piety, and loyal to him as their pastor; but the minds of preachers and people were much disturbed in regard to the doctrine which had been perverted into such an instrument of evil. Wesley had the sa-

gacity to see just where one abuse began. These wild teachers had sought to advance the work of entire sanctification by depreciating the religious state of all who failed to attain and profess it. They talked as if to be born of God is nothing; as if those who are able to profess nothing more than this ought to hide their heads with shame, and contemplate their religious condition with sorrow and alarm.

Wesley employed the press to correct the evil. He published in 1763 his sermon on "Sin in Believers," a sermon whose full import we see only when we read it in connection with the times and circumstances. It was evidently written, not to discourage those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, but to cheer those whose hearts have been

made sad by false doctrines ; who have been told, with all assurance, that so long as they detect the presence of an evil thought in their souls, no matter whence it comes, or how promptly and utterly they reject it, they are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. He held as firmly as ever, and asserts it in this very sermon, that *he who is born of God doth not commit sin*. But if this be so, then the pride, anger, love of the world, which he says may still be in the heart of the believer, are simply *temptations* to pride, anger, and love of the world. Bell and the other enthusiasts professed to have become so holy that they were out of the reach of these temptations, and denounced all who failed to attain the same fancied heights. Not content with a second work of grace by

which, as they claimed, their hearts were wholly purified from evil tempers, they began to profess a third, by which their minds, they said, were lifted above the reach of evil thoughts. Wesley's sermon on "Sin in Believers" is designed to be a refutation of these unscriptural notions.

Wesley also went to London, and by his personal presence and counsels sought to save his people from the destructive effects of religious error, this "high strained perfection," as he calls it in one of his letters. He spent a whole week in October, 1763, endeavoring "to confirm those who had been shaken as to the important doctrine of Christian Perfection, either by its wild defenders or wise opposers." He succeeded in great part in saving his Societies; but there were widespread and permanent effects

which he could not prevent. The follies and excesses of Bell, Maxfield, and their followers, created alarm in some minds, and prejudice in others; and a glorious doctrine was sorely wounded in the house of its friends. The preachers became afraid to teach it. In May, 1764, Wesley wrote to his brother that "the frightful stories written from London had made all the preachers in the North afraid even to mutter about perfection, and of course the people on all sides were grown good Calvinists on that point." He adds: "It is what I foresaw from the beginning; that the devil would strive by Thomas Maxfield and company to drive perfection out of the kingdom."

Some of the professors of entire sanctification maintained their position.

Wesley said, a year later, that he thought he knew five hundred witnesses of it, but as a body they gave way in all directions. In his annual visitations in 1765 he found that about two thirds had ceased to profess it. In 1770 he writes that of those who professed to obtain sanctification hardly one in thirty retained it. The defection in the London society, much under his own care, was as bad as in other places. Of the hundreds who had been partakers of the blessing he doubted, he said, "whether twenty are now as holy and as happy as they were." Even Mary Bosanquet, who afterward became the wife of the saintly Fletcher, had lost her confidence and ceased to be a witness. Charles Wesley was so pained by the scandal which grew out of the operations of Bell and his disciples that

he took a position which was construed into opposition to the whole doctrine. John Wesley himself was perplexed and distressed. Dr. Dodd, one of his clerical opponents, said in one of his publications: "A Methodist, according to Mr. Wesley, is one who is perfect, and sinneth not in thought, word, or deed." Wesley replied to this, "Sir, have me excused. I have told all the world, *I am not perfect*; and yet you allow me to be a *Methodist*. I tell you flat, *I have not attained* the character I draw. Will you pin it upon me in spite of my teeth?" Nor did he, to the latest day of his life, make any public profession, nor, as far as can now be ascertained, any private profession of the kind. The letter to Dr. Dodd is dated March 26, 1767.

In May, 1768, he writes to Charles Wesley a letter of six pithy lines :

“ I am at my wit’s end in regard to two things : the Church and Christian Perfection. Unless you and I both stand in the gap in good earnest the Methodists will drop both. Talking will not avail. We must *do*, or be borne away. Will you set shoulder to shoulder? If so, think deeply upon the matter, and tell me what can be done. *Age, vir esto! Nervos intendas tuos.* Peace be with you and yours.”

Four years afterward (1772) he again writes to Charles Wesley on the same subject, and in the same strain : “ I find almost all our preachers, in every circuit, have done with Christian Perfection. They say they believe it, but they never preach it, or not once in a quarter

What is to be done? Shall we let it drop, or make a point of it?" In his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," published in its final revision in 1777, he says: "We ask once for all, Shall we defend this Perfection, or give it up?" In 1762 the professors of this state of grace were numbered by thousands. In 1765 Wesley says that he thought he knew five hundred who professed it. In 1785 he writes: "SEVERAL persons have enjoyed this blessing without any interruption for many years. SEVERAL enjoy it at this day."—*Sermon on Perfection.*

This is a sad page of history. Fidelity to my own convictions, and the candor which the reader has a right to expect, impel me to say I am persuaded that it never need have been written, if the teachings which preceded and ac-

accompanied these strange events had been wholly clear and scriptural. Nor need we reflect on Mr. Wesley. Few men, in all human history, have sought for truth more diligently; none with a more honest heart; none with greater aggregate success.



CHAPTER V.

THE ERROR, AND ARGUMENTS AGAINST IT.

WE have often seen a mountain stream whose bright waters flowed on like liquid crystal till some little rivulet, stirred up by passing herds, poured in its muddy current and made the whole river turbid. Whence comes this turbidness of the Wesleyan stream? I accord most heartily in a sentiment of Bishop Foster, that "no one can properly investigate a subject, or even successfully examine the researches of another, until his mind, in relation to truth, is as the needle to the pole, ready to follow it whatever its direction." Sincerely endeavoring to search for the

truth, I find my convictions settling in a certain direction. It seems to me that Mr. Wesley's anxiety to explain his position, so as to accord with the latter part of the Ninth Article of the Church of England, led him into manifold error. That article teaches that original sin is "the fault or corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil," . . . "and this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated." There is no controversy among us in regard to the truth of the doctrine of natural depravity; but where is the proof that this "infection of nature" remains in the regenerate, the soul which is "born of God?" That one

born of God and made a new creature is still depraved, earthly, sensual, and devilish, is a startling proposition. It requires positive proof before it can be accepted.

The antecedent probabilities seem wholly against it. It looks strange that when the penitent comes, with his broken, trusting heart, to the Saviour, that he should do for him only half that needs to be done. Not so did Christ in his acts of healing while on earth. When the blind came, saying, *Lord, that I might receive my sight*, Christ did not cure one eye, and then require a new repentance and a new act of faith before he touched the other. When he healed the lame, it was not by a partial cure which sent him away limping. And if, as we all believe, the same act of faith

secured the pardon of sin and the regeneration of the soul, why should the inner salvation be less thorough than the outward? When Lazarus was raised from his grave, it was to vigorous life. He came not forth weak, faint, diseased, requiring a litter to convey him home. Instead of calling for careful hands to bear him tenderly to his house, Christ said, *Loose him, and let him go*. Can we suppose that Christ's power over spiritual death is less complete than over natural death?

If at conversion a residue of depravity is left in the soul, for what purpose is it left? Shall we adopt the hypothesis of Whitefield, that some Amalekites must be left in the land to keep Israel humble? In all that God has revealed of himself, or of his plans, I see nothing that ex-

plains why the "seeds of sin" should be left in the regenerate. Every reason that calls for the removal of half of the depravity, requires the removal of the whole of it.

And if a residue of corruption remains in him who is born of God, is it not an enemy within? Does it not chill love, mar obedience, hinder devotion, render temptations more numerous and more dangerous, and hang as a weight upon the soul in all its motions? And is not the babe in Christ weak, unskilled in the wiles of the adversary, and new to all the duties of the new life? Why must he set out, in his weakness, with this burden upon him? Wherefore must he begin his heavenward flight with a broken wing? Surely he who half cleanses the heart can make it wholly clean; and all

that we know of the character of God would cause us to expect him to complete the work at once.

One of the set arguments, on the residue hypothesis, to prove the possibility of the removal of the "seeds of sin," is that, if this residue cannot be removed, then its remaining is man's misfortune, not his fault. This argument, whatever its value in other directions, is fatal to the hypothesis on which it is based. Can it be that a man born of God is, when the divine work is wrought, left in a state which compels us to pronounce him either unfortunate or guilty?

And again, if a certain residue of depravity remains in the regenerate man, but is removed when he attains entire sanctification, what will be his condition if he relapses from entire sanctification to

mere justification again? Does exactly the former fraction of the old nature return, or more, or less? Surely a theory which so militates against all which we might with apparent reason expect needs very positive proof, a good foundation in Scripture declaration and example. Is it true, then, that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated?" I am free to confess my doubt, and to set forth briefly some of the reasons which compel me to doubt.

I. The residue theory is not supported by sufficient Scripture evidence.

If there is one single passage of Scripture which directly asserts that one born of God, and in a normal condition as a regenerated soul, still has a degree of depravity in him, where is that passage? It is really surprising that a doctrine

should go so long unquestioned, when its ablest adherents show so scanty an array of Scripture and prove so little by it. Wesley, in his sermon on "Sin in Believers," cites but six passages to prove the doctrine, and not one of them clearly contains it.

He first quotes Gal. v, 17: *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* He says that in these words Paul is "speaking to believers, and describing the state of believers in general." How can this be when the very first remark he makes to the Galatians is that he *marvels that they are so soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ unto another gospel?* He calls them *foolish,*

speaks of their *biting and devouring one another*, and tells them that they are *fallen from grace*. They were not all alike fallen; for Paul adds: *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one*. The Church in Galatia was evidently in a very bad condition; many of the members seem to have departed wholly from the faith, and there were grievous sins among them. Paul hoped that the Church might be saved from utter wreck, but was not sure of it. Is it safe, then, to take a remark, made to describe such a motley company, as a correct description of every one who is born of God?

He next quotes First Corinthians iii, 1, 3, 4: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ; . . .*

Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

Paul called them carnal because of their envy, strife, and factions. Consequently the term applies only to those who were guilty of envy, strife, and faction. And did Paul allude to temptations simply, or genuine, open sins, known and read of all? He wrote with *anguish of heart and many tears*, rebuking wickedness, visible, palpable, shameful, and not describing the moral condition of those who, as Mr. Wesley says in this very sermon, "have power both over outward and inward sin, even from the moment they are justified."

He cites the Second Epistle to the Corinthians vii, 1: *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us*

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Mr. Wesley says, in regard to this passage, that in it Paul “plainly teaches that those believers were not yet cleansed therefrom.”

But what does Paul teach about himself? He says, *Let US cleanse OURSELVES from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.* He certainly includes himself. Does Paul, “the aged,” the inspired apostle of Christ, in the twenty-sixth year of his ministry, and only six years before his martyrdom, confess that he is not yet cleansed? And how shall we interpret numberless other exhortations which assume the same shape; this, for instance: *Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunken-*

ness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. Rom. xiii, 13. Does Paul here "plainly teach" that the Roman Christians were "not cleansed therefrom," nor he himself? Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians is simply a strong appeal to them to continue in the love of God, with all fidelity, serving him *with a perfect heart and a willing mind.*

Lastly, Mr. Wesley quotes *what the Spirit saith unto the Churches* of Ephesus, Pergamos, and Sardis. The admonitions were addressed to the ministers of the several Churches named, as the representatives of the flocks to which they ministered; and they are not to be construed as merely descriptive of the religious condition of the pastors themselves. But Wesley construes the passage as if it were addressed to the pastors

only. "Who can doubt that there was faith in the angel of the Church at Ephesus when our Lord said to him, *I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience?* But was there, meantime, no sin in his heart? Yea, or Christ would not have added, *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* This was a real sin which God saw in his heart, of which, accordingly, he is exhorted to *repent*; and yet we have no authority to say that even then he had no faith." But was that of which he was reminded simply a temptation, involving no condemnation? If it was, why summon him to repent of it, and *remember whence he had fallen, and do his first works*, lest God should *come quickly, and remove the candlestick out of its place?* Moreover, this rebuke

came upon the Ephesian pastor, if we construe it as does Mr. Wesley, because he had *left his first love*. What, then, was his religious state before he left his first love? How can a rebuke, administered to a man because he has fallen, prove anything in regard to the religious state of those who do not fall?

The angel of the Church of Pergamos was also exhorted to *repent, or else* God would *come quickly, and fight against them*. Nothing but overt sin could provoke such a threat. The angel of the Church of Sardis is exhorted to *strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die*. How does the state of a Church, or of a man, whose piety is at the point of death, prove that there is a residue of depravity left in one born of God who has not been unfaithful?

These, then, are the Scripture proofs of the doctrine that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated." One of the six is a general exhortation to fidelity in all things. The other five are admonitions and rebukes administered to Churches which had fallen into open sin. The very utmost that these admonitions can prove is, not that there is a residue of depravity in every believer, but that there may be "sin" in a believer; that the all-merciful God is so patient toward all who enter his service that, so far from being eager to cast them off, he bears with them, and calls them still his own, even when they begin to falter. I repeat it: the sermon on Sin in Believers has been misunderstood, because its place in history has been overlooked. It was

written in the midst of the abuses of 1763, and was designed to refute the "high perfectionists," who made the heart of the righteous sad, by denying that any were Christians except those who inhabited the same imaginary heights on which they dreamed that they were themselves dwelling.

II. The general tenor of Scripture in regard to the new birth is such that it can hardly be reconciled with the idea that partial depravity is the normal condition of the regenerate.

He who is born of God is said to be a new man. *Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given*

to us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Cor. v, 17-18.

“ Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Rom. vi, 18.

“ But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Rom. vi, 22.

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to put off “ the old man,” which is corrupt, and to *put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* Eph. iv, 22-24.

In almost identical language he describes the Colossians as those who *have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.* Col. iii, 9, 10.

John Wesley's description of the *new man* is entirely correct and scriptural :

“ We allow that the state of a justified person is inexpressibly great and glorious. He is born again, ‘ not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’ He is a child of God, a member of Christ, an heir of the kingdom of heaven. ‘ The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keepeth his heart and mind in Christ Jesus.’ His very body is a ‘ temple of the Holy Ghost,’ and a ‘ habitation of God through the Spirit.’ He is ‘ created anew in Christ Jesus.’ He is washed, he is sanctified. His heart is purified by faith ; he is ‘ cleansed from the corruption that is in the word ;’ ‘ the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him.’ And so long as he ‘ walketh

in love' (which he may always do) he worships God in spirit and in truth. He keepeth the commandments of God, and doeth those things that are pleasing in his sight, so exercising himself as to 'have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man;' and he has power both over outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified."—*Sermon on Sin in Believers.*

Who would suspect, after hearing this exalted description of the regenerate man, that he needs to be "thoroughly convinced of the total corruption of his nature?" Wesley's portrait of the new man expresses the general tenor of the Scripture. If there is one line in all God's word which clearly warns any believer of the sin that is in him, except in connection with conduct which demands

rebuke or admonition, I confess that I do not know where to find it.

Nor have we any thing in Scripture biography to prove the residue theory. What Old Testament saint, or New Testament Christian, "so far perfect as not to commit sin," was ever distressed about his residuary carnality, or was "thoroughly convinced of the total corruption of his nature," sought deliverance from it as a special act of grace, succeeded, and had the witness of the Spirit that the work was done? One clear, indisputable instance is enough; but where is it?

III. The ablest writers who have discussed these subjects on the residue theory have not been able, in their descriptions of the Christian life, to maintain a clear, practical distinction between

those who are supposed to be simply regenerate, and those who are accounted to be freed from all depravity.

As we have already seen, Mr. Wesley himself fails to keep a clear line of distinction between the two states. He declares that one who is born of God "has power over both outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified." In the sermon on 'Patience' he speaks of the new birth, declaring that "there is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness." In his sermon on "Salvation by Faith" he says: "He that is by faith born of God sinneth not by any habitual sin;" "nor by any willful sin;" "nor by any sinful desire;" "nor doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought."

In his "Farther Thoughts on Christian Perfection," published in 1763, he admits that the highest degree attainable on earth will not save a man from mistakes, and that "these mistakes will frequently occasion something wrong, both in our tempers, and words, and actions." Here the religious state of the entirely sanctified man is put below that of one who is simply born of God. He says, in the sermon on the Marks of the New Birth, "A fruit which can in no wise be separated from it, no, not for an hour, is power over sin," inward and outward; "for it purifieth the heart from every unholy desire and temper." Yet, strange to tell, in his sermon on Christian Perfection, which is a set effort to draw the distinguishing line, he says that the perfect man exceeds the other, in that he

is "freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers."

In his sermon on the Witness of the Spirit, Mr. Wesley affirms that many texts of Scripture, "with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince that there is in every believer both the testimony of God's Spirit and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God." In his sermon on the Marks of the New Birth, he teaches that among those marks are peace, hope, love, and freedom from sin.

But Bishop Hamline argues at considerable length that it is consistent with an entirely sanctified state for a man to be compelled to say, "Now and then my communion with God is interrupted;" "I suffer inward conflicts;" "I am frequently unconscious of anything like

triumph ;” “ I am often perplexed in regard to my religious state.”—*Works*, vol. ii, p. 347.

Dr. Wakefield defines regeneration to be “ an inward and thorough renovation of our being ;” that “ moral change in man, by which he is saved from the love, the practice, and the dominion of sin, and enabled, with full choice of will, and the energy of right affections, to love God and keep his commandments ;” while Entire Sanctification is “ entire conformity of heart and life to the will of God, as made known to us in his word.”—Pp. 425, 426. Well may he add, that “ Entire Sanctification does not differ in essence from Regeneration.”—P. 446.

And well may Watson remark, that “ the regeneration which accompanies

justification is a large approach to this state of perfected holiness.”—*Institutes*, vol. ii, p. 455.

Bishop Foster explains Entire Sanctification to be the state of one who is “entirely free from sin, properly so called, both inward and outward;” while Mr. Wesley says, that taking the word sin “in its plain, common acceptation,” one born of God does not commit sin; and a greater than he says the same thing. Surely here is some confusion of tongues.

There is great significance in the conclusion to which Mr. Wesley and his preachers came in 1747, that Perfection should be preached by way of promise, “by drawing rather than by driving.” The very moment one attempts to drive, he is logically compelled to disparage the state of justification, and represent

it as somehow unsatisfactory and unsafe. In no other way can a sufficient difference between the two states be shown to justify the driving. Here is just the point where Bell and his fellow-enthusiasts left the true path, and began their career of extravagance and folly. No wonder that Mr. Wesley was unwilling to let the young preachers try to explain in their sermons the exact difference between the two stages of the Christian life. He that can see any marked, practical distinction between the two, as Mr. Wesley himself describes them, must have a little of the Hudibrastic acumen which

“ Could distinguish and divide
A hair 'twixt south and south-west side.”



CHAPTER VI.

THE ERROR: TWO MORE ARGUMENTS.

IV. THE religious experience of the beginner can be explained without the assumption that depravity still remains in his heart.

It is said that "the position that there is no sin in a believer, no carnal mind," is "contrary to the experience" of God's children. "These continually feel a heart bent to backsliding, a natural tendency to evil, a proneness to depart from God, and cleave to the things of earth. They are daily sensible of sin remaining in their heart, pride, self-will, unbelief, and of sin cleaving to all they speak and do, even their best actions

and holiest duties. Yet, at the same time, they ‘know that they are of God;’ they cannot doubt of it one moment.” “So that they are equally assured that sin is in them, and ‘Christ is in them the hope of glory.’”—*Sermon on Sin in Believers.*

This is a strong delineation, but it is not necessary so to construe it as to make Mr. Wesley contradict himself. He did not intend in this passage to recant what he had been teaching all his life. He had already said, in this same sermon, that a justified man “has power over outward and inward sin, even from the moment he is justified.” By the term “sin,” in the passage first quoted, then, he cannot mean that there is guilt in a believer, nor any state of mind or heart which involves condemnation.

Consequently, instead of sin, properly so called, he means simply temptation, or that which originates temptation. Arguing in support of the residue theory, he cites these temptations as proof that the "infection of nature" may remain in the regenerate. The pride and self-will which he names are therefore practically temptations to pride and self-will, and temptations only; and the unbelief which remains in the heart of a true believer is weak faith only.

But he cites these temptations as a proof of a source of temptation within, a demonstration that the inner nature is still infected. The fact of temptation, even if it comes from within, does not prove the point at issue. The first temptation and the first sin in human history were recorded for our instruction in righteous-

ness; and they teach us lessons of profoundest wisdom. Let us examine them for a moment.

Eve was pure in her whole being; with no defect, no taint of depravity of any kind. By the craft of the adversary she was drawn into discourse, doubtless prolonged far beyond what is revealed in the brief narrative, in regard to the forbidden fruit, and the prohibition, compliance with which was appointed to be the test of their loyalty to God, the condition of their continuance in the divine favor. Her eyes and her thoughts were kept upon the tree until she *saw that it was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.* Here were three enticements, each of which appealed to an element of perfect human nature, and tend-

ed to create a desire which in itself was wholly innocent. There was, first, the promised gratification of the love for pleasant food; secondly, the gratification of the inner taste, which delights in beautiful forms and colors; and, thirdly, the promised joy of increasing mental power and mental treasure.

The third element of the temptation was doubtless the strongest and most dangerous. It is a poor fancy to imagine that Adam and Eve, while adult in stature, were infants in intellect. It is not unreasonable to infer that they possessed a mental vigor which none of their posterity have equaled. A perfect mind acting through a perfect brain, a perfect physical organization, could hardly be otherwise than active, acute, powerful, quick to apprehend, and strong to

retain its acquisitions. A mind like this, studying a perfect creation, all new, all beautiful and good, reflecting the divine glory in man and beast, and bird and insect, in every leaf upon the trees of Eden as well as in every star that by night hung over it, must have found perpetual exquisite enjoyment. Life itself must have been a succession of beautiful surprises, and every hour full of mingled wonder and adoration.

The enemy doubtless knew all this, and plied his arts skillfully. Eve stood looking at the beautiful tree, and listening to the cunning words of the tempter, assuring her of the unknown stores of pleasure within her reach, and the safety with which they might be seized. The longer she looked at the tree, and listened to the subtle tongue of the devil,

the more she felt the power of the temptation. The elements of her nature to which appeal was made were holy; the desires which sprung up were in themselves perfectly innocent. Yet, innocent as they were, these desires began to urge in the direction of sin. And still she looked and listened, while the honeyed speech went on, assuring her of mental enjoyment, new, untold, and yet safe; and the pressure increased, until at last she began to weigh the question of obedience or disobedience. And here is the place where sin began. To ponder that question is to begin to yield. Up to this point there was no guilt incurred; but now she considers whether to obey or disobey. And still she looked, and listened, and wished, until the desire overpowered all else, and she *took of the*

fruit and did eat. The deed was done, the compact was violated, and Satan triumphed over his victim.

All trial life implies temptation. All human needs and desires, though in themselves innocent, are sources of danger. Even a holy nature, as in the case of our first parents, may have in it elements which demand steady control, and without it work death. That a soul born of God should be still subject to temptation, and that it should not be free from sources of peril within, is not incomprehensible. Is it difficult to see how an innocent desire may impel in the direction of moral wrong? Illustrations might be multiplied to any extent.

A ship is wrecked. Two survivors of the crew reach a fragment of the shattered vessel, and day after day drift

helplessly upon the cruel sea. At last nothing remains of their scanty store of food and drink except two biscuits and a gill of water. These they reserve till they are at the point of death from thirst and starvation. The weary night succeeds the weary day, and morning comes again, but no land, no sail, greets their longing eyes. They bring out the last morsel, and resolve to eat and drink, and then lie down and wait, and, if they must, die. One eats and drinks his little portion in a moment, and feels as famished as ever. He begins to look at the biscuit in the hand of his comrade; he sees the scanty supply of water in the vessel, and the sight renders his hunger and thirst still more intense. The thought occurs, "I am stronger than he. I can take that away from him." Here is a

thought of sin, but not of necessity a sinful thought. Hunger and thirst are raging within him, unreasoning impulses which regard right and wrong no more than does the force of gravitation. They here press, too, in the direction of the wrong. Conscience, honor, friendship, humanity, oppose. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* But the force which opposes conscience and honor is in itself innocent; and so long as conscience maintains perfect supremacy there is not a taint of sin.

Thus Christ himself was tempted after he had fasted forty days and was a hungered, Satan taking advantage of the hour of physical distress to make his assault. Thus Christ *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Thus it be-

comes clear that where there is no taint of depravity there may be impulses, and even impulses originating within the nature, which urge in the direction of sin. I will even admit that these inner sources of danger may be increased by a previous life of sin. The penitent inebriate believes and is pardoned and regenerated; but his brain, long accustomed to the intoxicant, may be so affected by the sudden withholding of it as to feel intense distress; and he is tortured by an almost intolerable longing for the old indulgence. This is the direct result of sin; yet it is not now sin, but disease; and in the pardoned man neither the disease nor the perils which it involves are proof that depravity still remains in the immortal soul.

Possibly we may gather some light

from this subject to aid in the interpretation of the passage in James: *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*, (James i, 14.) The term "lust" carries a bad face, but the original word (*ἐπιθυμία*) has no such aspect. Paul employs precisely the same term when he declares that he has *a desire to depart and be with Christ*. To be human is to be endowed with appetites and passions, innocent in themselves, but unreasoning, requiring to be guided by the intellect and the conscience, and controlled by the will. These appetites and passions may ally themselves to thought, but in themselves are void of thought, and know only to press onward. Man's duty and safety demand that they be subjugated, taught to obey. He is like one who drives a team of blind

horses ; he must rein them up, and guide, and control them, or be dashed in pieces. When they master him, instead of his mastering them, ruin is not far off.

There are affections, also, in themselves not only innocent, but essential to a perfect humanity, which may at times impel in the direction of sin. A father whose children need food and medicine, which he has not the means of providing, finds a purse of money ; and as he looks at it the thought occurs, " O that this were mine ! what comfort and healing would it bring to my loved ones." There is no sin in that thought. Another thought swiftly follows, " No one saw me pick it up. I can use the money, and no one will suspect me." Still there may be no sin. He may feel sad, too, when he reflects that he cannot honestly

conceal the purse and use the money to save the lives of his children ; but there is no guilt in his sadness. If he for a time wavers in his design to return it to the loser, he will feel guilty the moment he detects his hesitation ; but if he has the mastery in all his mental contest, not only is he guiltless, but there is nothing in the whole experience that proves the presence of depravity, either partial or total.

Then, again, we have an invisible enemy who delights to tempt even where he cannot overcome, and harass where he cannot destroy. Satan tempted David to be proud of his kingdom. He put it into the heart of Judas to betray his Master. He put it into the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie. These are instances where he succeeded. Who can

number the instances in which he assails? And who can tell, when evil suggestions, specious reasonings in favor of the wrong, spring up in his mind, from what source they come? A cold heart may chill devotion, and so may physical weariness. A lack of faith may fill the mind with anxiety and apprehension in regard to things temporal or spiritual; and yet a tendency to be apprehensive may be nothing but the first indication of approaching illness.

How then can one born of God infer from the nature of his temptations, or their numbers, or their strength, that the "infection of nature doth still remain?" And if, as Watson declares, the change which he has undergone involves "the utter destruction of the power of sin in the heart," (Sermons, II, p. 413,) how can he

be sure that depravity exists there at all? And if, while he never expects in this world to get beyond the reach of temptation, he is steadily triumphing over them, why need he be anxious to ascertain their source? If the matches of the incendiary are extinguished so promptly that not a spark comes from them, nor even the smell of smoke, it matters little whether he is trying to set fire to the house from the inside or the outside.

V. The religious experience of the advanced Christian can be explained without assuming that, after his justification, depravity, either total or partial, remains in his heart until a special act of faith frees him from it.

The word of God recognizes distinctions of degree among genuine followers

of Christ. Some are described as weak, others as strong in the Lord. Some are very princes in Israel, and others, like the conies, are *a feeble folk*. Paul calls the Philippians his *brethren dearly beloved and longed for*, his *joy and crown*; but when he addressed the unfaithful Galatians he said, *I stand in doubt of you*. When he looked in the one direction he felt that he had not labored in vain. When he turned his eyes upon the others, he felt disappointment contending with hope. These things indicate a wide difference, not only in the outward conduct of these two companies of professed converts, but in the very elements of Christian character. The prophet Ezekiel, portraying the divine determination to punish sin, declares that when God brings pestilence upon the land, because

of the iniquities of the people, *these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.* Here three men are named as eminent for their piety. No higher praise could be given men. Thus in later times Zacharias and Elizabeth *walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.*

In all ages, in all lands, where God is known, in all branches of the Church of Christ, there have been those who went *on to perfection, grew up into fullness of stature, and were filled with all the fullness of God.* Every-where they have shone as lights in the world. Joyfully we read the record of their holy lives, and glorify God in them. Their names are among the treasures of the Church; and from their bright example we learn

faith, hope, fidelity, courage for the right. Modern times, as well as the ages which are gone, have felt their presence and the power of their piety. Our own Church, as well as others, records the names of Christian men and women whose lives, like Jerusalem above, shine with the glory of God. It is easy to begin the list: Wesley, Fletcher, Bramwell, Asbury, Hedding—but where shall we end? Among the living, and among those who suspect it least of all, are men and women whose fidelity and spirituality irradiate wide spaces about them; and even the careless world *takes knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.*

The Scriptures not only recognize eminent piety, but encourage all believers to attain it. It exhorts us to *go on unto perfection; to abound more and*

more in all the graces of the Spirit; to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to grow up into Christ in all things; to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom.

The same high privilege is held out to us in the beautiful figures of the Scripture. It is declared that *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day; that the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon, that he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf shall not wither.* The kingdom of God is said to be *like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the*

seeds that be in the earth, but it groweth up and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Nor is this growth limited to any one rate of progress. Wesley seems to have thought at one time that nothing is possible beyond a gradual advance, whose several steps are so small as to be imperceptible. Thus he speaks of sanctification as a "progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God." (Sermon on the New Birth.) Thus he exhorts those who seek the fullness of blessing "not to fret" against God, because the work is not wholly done. "Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, know-

ing that it will come, and will not tarry.”
(Sermon on Satan’s Devices.)

His later views on the subject are incomplete, possibly, but they recognize clearly the power of faith to hasten spiritual growth. The work of grace in the soul is subject to a thousand modifications, the causes of some of which we are able to trace; and of others totally unable. The temperament of the convert, the natural tenacity with which he carries out his purposes, his mental activity and ability, the clearness of his religious views and the facility with which he gathers religious knowledge, the thoroughness of conviction with which he begins to serve God, and the completeness of the surrender which he makes at the beginning, will all affect his subsequent progress.

Still, there is no limitation of times and seasons. Sometimes as much progress is made in an hour as was accomplished during previous years. A clear apprehension of the blessing, an ardent desire, a full surrender of all that we have and are, and hope for, a fixed purpose, a strong faith, urging the believer to the throne of God in humble, persistent, importunate prayer, cannot fail. And where all these become fixed habits of the soul and control the whole life, *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*, there will be steady progress.

That a great work should be wrought in the soul of the experienced Christian in a brief space of time need not surprise us; nor need we seek to account for it as recovery from a previous deca-

dence. No such explanation is necessary. There are times in the life of the most faithful follower of Christ when new light seems to beam about him. He sees opening before his spiritual vision new possibilities of faith, and hope, and love. The divine law, the divine character, seem holier and sin more hateful than ever before. Earth fades, heaven comes nearer. He looks at himself and finds how far below his privilege he has been living. He realizes that he is a spiritual dwarf, compared with what he ought to have been by this time. Then come, if may be, shame and sorrow that he has not done better. He still has peace with God. He does not feel that the wrath of God is upon him, because of the smallness of his spiritual stature, but he realizes that with all this

new light he cannot rest content with his present attainments ; that he would be condemned by his own conscience if he were to make no effort to advance to something higher, nobler, nearer God, and more like God. He burns with ardor of desire for God. He seeks in humble, importunate, believing prayer. And then comes the baptism of the Holy Ghost, rich, full, abundant, filling his soul with peace, and blessing, and salvation.

And thus the Christian rises from a lower to a higher plane of experience. His faith holds with a stronger grasp, his hope shines with brighter light, his love burns with a more steady flame. Every element of his character is clothed with new beauty and power. He is more faithful, more active, more zealous,

more humble, more watchful. He may still have temptations, but victory is more prompt and more complete. He is a larger Christian, worth more to the Church and the world than ever before, more *thoroughly furnished to all good works*. Nor need his growth cease at this point. All upward progress only reveals higher possibilities, other realms, like Bunyan's land of Beulah, "where the sun always shines, and the birds always sing."

Nor will the divine work wrought in the soul be of necessity defective because our theories fail to explain it. God's people would indeed fare ill if his dealings with them were no wiser than their prayers. What human father would be so cruel to his children as to limit himself by their inexperience? God will

not deal thus with the *sons* whom he is *bringing unto glory*. We know in whom we have believed. With the apostle we will exclaim, *Glory, throughout all ages, world without end, be to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us!* As the little child comes to the earthly parent, and even if it can make its wants known only by inarticulate cries and flowing tears, yet is understood, and parental love ministers to it far beyond its own scanty knowledge, so the child of God, coming into his presence with his burden of want, shall receive answers that go far beyond his poor prayers.

That God does so pass beyond us is matter of daily experience. We sometimes *ask amiss and receive not*; and

when we see more clearly, thank God that our unwise petition was not granted. We put our trust in him, and he careth for us, in advance of our hopes and fears, arming us for conflicts which we have not foreseen, and preparing for us blessings which we, in our ignorance, did not know that we needed. He hears the prayer of the sincere worshiper, where the want is real, but the thought is wholly astray. Some years ago, I knew a man who, when convinced of his sin and danger, prayed for a new heart, found pardon and peace, and lives to this day a faithful Christian. But I learned, some years after his conversion, that when he prayed for a new heart he thought, in his simplicity, that he must have a change of the literal heart which beat in his breast ; that this identical or-

gan had been so long the home of Satan that it must be taken out of his body, and a new one substituted. But did he fail because of his strange idea? God's answer was wiser than the prayer, and went beyond the knowledge of the penitent. His penitence, his faith, gave him success.

He that comes to God with a burning desire for spiritual growth, for a stronger faith, a surer hope, a more fervent love to God and all that is God's; who yearns for a clearer insight into divine things, and a fuller experience of them, a closer alliance with the world unseen, a warmer fellowship with God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; a heart filled with all the fullness of God; a heart into which nothing that brings with it the least touch or taint of sin can

find entrance, will not hunger and thirst in vain. God will answer his prayer; and be to him exceeding abundantly above all he asks or thinks.



CHAPTER VII.

THE CONCLUSION : AN APPEAL.

CHRISTIAN reader, how do these things look? Where are you in reference to them? Are you a beginner, having just entered the highway of holiness? Bless God for your conversion. You are washed, regenerated, saved. *Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.* Believing, trusting, obeying, employing for the hour the grace which the hour brings with it, you are the Lord's. Powerless in yourself, you are clothed with Divine might to overcome the world and sin. Your state is most exalted. You are called to a place among God's people,

who are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

You see your calling. Do not for one moment undervalue your present attainments. You are now a child of God. He has graciously adopted you into his family, and made you not only a child but an heir. A crown and a kingdom awaits you. Remember this ever, and be not unworthy of your royal lineage. You are not so far away in point of time from your former life of sin that you forget it. It seems so near that you wonder at the change, and are almost ready to question the reality of the transition. But the change is real. Do not doubt it, wonderful as it seems. Still, do not

mistake. You will not reach the goal at a bound, nor win the battle with a single blow. *So run, that you may obtain; so fight, not as one that beateth the air.*

Remember, from the first hour of your acceptance you are called to be holy. *He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* Continuous victory is your birthright. You have *come out of darkness into marvelous light*; and you may so live that the shadows return not. But be not ignorant of the devices of your enemy. You will be tempted; so craftily, too, that you will be at a loss to tell whence the poisoned arrow comes. Satan and his angels will hover about your path, ready to assault at every opportunity. Impulses from within, innocent in themselves it may be, will require con-

stant constraint, or become sources of evil. Only by wariness and self-mastery, by steadiness of purpose and fidelity in all things, can you be safe. *Grow, then, in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Go on unto perfection.* Aspire to the highest attainable point, the best gifts of God's grace. Aim to be a thorough Christian, fully developed, well rounded on every side.

Many sincere followers of Christ are one sided, strong in some elements of the Christian character, and not so strong in others. One has faith, but lacks hope. Another has faith and hope, but does not abound in charity. A third has faith, hope, and charity, but is deficient in humility, zeal, or patience. Thus good men, on their way to *the city which hath foundations*, exhibit the Christian

graces in various degrees of development, and are unequally equipped for the varied duties of the new life. They are strong here, weak there, rounded out on this side, sunken on that. Aspire, then, to completeness, thoroughness, perfection. Let us examine, briefly, four elements of a strong and beautiful Christian character.

1. Thorough conviction of the truth of God's word, and the reality of the things revealed therein.

The possibility of doubt belongs, almost of necessity, to a probationary state. God could, if he deemed it best, so reveal himself that unbelief would be impossible. He might write his laws upon the azure skies, and utter them in the voice of the storm. He might cause the earth to open beneath the feet of

every transgressor, as it did in the case of Korah. He could smite every sinner, at the very moment of transgression, with so stern and so visible a hand that obedience would have little moral value. Not to thrust one's hand into a blazing furnace is not proof of uncommon sagacity. To get out of the way of a railway train is not virtue. For children to obey when the father stands holding the rod over them, is no proof that they possess the spirit of true obedience. Take them when they are away from home, when they fancy that the father will never hear of their conduct, and then, if they obey, *the root of the matter is found in them.*

That moral liberty may not be destroyed, God withdraws himself from human vision. *He maketh darkness his*

secret place; his pavilion round about him are dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. He is manifested, in a certain sense, in his works. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and so does earth. Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him?* And because He is not seen, *the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;* and even God's people are not beyond the reach of the fiery arrows of the adversary. He may ask us questions like these: "How do you know, not only that the Scriptures are true, but that you understand them? How do you know that there is another life beyond this—a day of judgment, a heaven, a hell? What do you know of a world which your eyes have never beheld, and from which none of your

nearest friends, who have gone hence, ever return to tell you what death has revealed to them?"

But he who would be a strong Christian must not waver. Let him examine the evidences of the Bible as fully as his mental needs require, and then let him take his position, firmly and finally: "Here will I stand; this Book shall be my guide; I will believe, trust, obey. Come what will, whatever proves true, whatever proves false in the future, here will I rest; on this rock will I build my hopes, my purposes, my life, my eternity."

2. A thoroughly fixed, ever active, all-controlling principle of obedience to the Divine will.

A fixed belief in God carries with it, logically, the obligation to obey his laws; but the obligation must be recog-

nized intelligently, deliberately, and fully. We are not our own; we *are bought with a price*, and God claims us. Let him, then, who would become a strong Christian say, in his heart, and with all his heart, "I am the Lord's; not reluctantly, but with joy I own the infinite obligation. I am the Lord's, wholly and forever: I exult in the thought. Here, at the foot of the cross, I devote my life to his service. All I am, all I possess, all of which I am capable, every act, every word, every thought, every emotion, every plan, hope, and desire—all are Christ's, and shall be his, forever. Come what will—honor or reproach, joy or sorrow, life or death—I am the Lord's; and with all my powers of mind and soul and body, with my whole being, will I serve Him,

wholly, earnestly, joyfully, world without end."

3. A thorough understanding of the duties and the spirit of the Christian life.

Conscience does not inspire all needed knowledge. Very good men have done some very strange things. Scores of Christian churches are standing to-day in this land of ours which were built by means of lotteries. A hundred years ago good men made and sold alcoholic drinks, and themselves drank them daily, sometimes to a degree of intoxication. George Whitefield, one of the most laborious and successful ministers of the Gospel that ever lived, seemed to care for nothing but to serve God and do good. He traveled thousands of miles to solicit funds to erect his orphan asylum

in Georgia, secured for the institution a large tract of land, and then bought seventy-five negroes to cultivate the plantation.

No; conscience is not an inspiration of all truth in regard to morals and religion. God does nothing needlessly. When he gave the Ten Commandments to Moses he wrote them upon stone that they might be the visible, permanent standard of right. *And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.* As the light is created for the eye, and the eye for the light, so conscience and revelation are given, each for the other. As the best eye needs the light, that there may be vision, so the most tender conscience needs revealed truth, or man *walketh in darkness, and knoweth not*

whither he goeth. The most conscientious can only do what they believe to be right, and, where there is a lack of knowledge, they are liable to do evil while they are aiming to do well.

They who write, set down the forms of the letters as they remember them. Each has a style of penmanship peculiar to himself, because he has adopted certain peculiar ways of shaping the letters. Each identifies his own writing, because he recognizes the shapes which he has adopted. That which is without, merely represents that which is within. If the shapes, as the mind sees them, are accurate, the forms on the paper will be good. If the mental shapes are defective, the writing will be poor. Thus the visible is controlled by the invisible.

Thus, however conscientious and de-

vout a Christian may be, his outward life will be shaped by the idea within. He can do only what he believes to be the Divine will ; and if the inner thought be astray, the outward act will be equally out of the way. He will be honest, according to his idea of honesty ; he will be true, according to his notion of truthfulness only ; he will be devotional, benevolent, and faithful, only as, in his thinking, he figures devotion, benevolence, and fidelity. That which is without, is shaped by that which is within. He may, indeed, fall below his ideal, but he can never rise above it.

He who would be a thorough Christian needs not only to comprehend the law of God, but to catch the spirit of the new life, its purity of motive, its high courage, its divine sense of honor,

its generous love, its joyous loyalty to God and the right, its lofty enthusiasm for all that is elevated and noble. Complete obedience carries the whole heart with it. He who scans the requirements of the Divine law with the keen eye and reluctant spirit of a miser paying a debt, which he would repudiate if he dared, can render no acceptable service. He who is always anxiously inquiring for the lowest terms upon which he may persuade himself that he is a Christian, might as well conclude, first as last, that it costs too much for him.

But he who is gratefully, joyfully loyal to God with his whole heart needs to secure a full and accurate idea of practical religion. When he can say sincerely with the Psalmist, *I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget*

thy word—he needs to add the Psalmist's prayer: *Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach me thy statutes.* He ought to remember alway the twofold exhortation of the apostle, *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Knowledge without grace is worth little. Grace without knowledge is shorn of its strength. Grace and knowledge make a strong and beautiful character, adorned with every virtue and enriched with all the elements of spiritual power.

4. An unfaltering trust in God, and in the Lord Jesus Christ as a present and all-powerful Saviour.

He who is striving with his whole heart to please God and do his duty, as he is led thereto by the Divine word, is in the path of life. I care not how little

peace, how little hope or joy, he may possess; if the blackness of darkness is about him alway, if it seems to him that not a ray of light salutes his eager eyes, still let him keep steadily on his way. He is assuredly in the narrow path, and he will *yet see the king in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off*. Ofttimes the seeming clouds which shut out the sun are but the dimness of our own eyes—not the darkening of the heavens.

Nevertheless, darkness and doubt are not the normal condition of a child of God. Where the intellect clearly apprehends Divine truth, and the heart joyfully consents, and the whole soul accepts, believes, trusts, appropriates the promises, the natural result is peace and joy. And this present, clinging, appro-

priating faith is the instrument whereby the believer maintains his hold on God and allies himself to eternal powers. This union is the strength of the Christian. We read in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the record of the achievements of the worthies of old, and we find that their victories were all the triumphs of faith. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death. By faith Noah builded the ark; and Abraham, looking for a city which hath foundations, journeyed, not knowing whither he went; and Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; and the long line of divine heroes subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

and triumphed in the prison and the flame.

The same faith is still needed to enable men to war against an evil world, breaking its snares, defying its enmity, and keeping themselves unspotted from its sins. The same faith is needed to resist the attacks of spiritual foes, and to maintain the watchfulness and self-mastery without which defeat is inevitable. By this same faith is gained all spiritual growth, a warmer love, a brighter hope, a more steady trust, a swifter progress upward toward God and the light. Thus the soul, in the hour when Christ is very near, and the Spirit of God reveals the riches of grace, sees opening to its raptured vision glorious possibilities of attainment; when it perceives how small and feeble

the past has been, compared with what may be; when there comes an ardent desire for a more thorough conformity to the Divine will, a fuller joy, a clearer vision of things unseen, a yearning to ascend the heights and fathom the depths revealed, and know all the sweetness and the power of grace, all the fullness of God, then faith is the hand that seizes the infinite prize and grasps the treasures of heaven.

Will the reader suffer a word of exhortation? Grow. A healthy spiritual condition always tends to advance in divine things. Every one, indeed, who is born of God has attained an exalted state. He is the King's son. Let him not undervalue his birthrights. Still, his trial-life is not ended. He is in the midst of enemies. The devil

assails, the world allures, his own impulses and tendencies demand constant watchfulness and control. But every step of true progress brings new courage and skill for the warfare, a better access to God in prayer, a prompter victory over temptation, a more steady peace, and a richer joy. Each advance gives a better preparation for acceptable service and for useful labors. Each degree of progress lessens the perils of the way, gives new assurance of final victory, and brings into clearer outline the image of God in the soul. Thus the earnest, faithful follower of Christ grows in grace, and, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image from glory to glory.* Assuredly, progress is exceedingly desirable.

Moreover, continuous growth is a condition of continuous religious enjoyment.

We go into the orchard in May. A cloud of blossoms delights the eye and loads the air with fragrance, while the hum of bees fills the place with soft music. We inquire the age of the trees, and the response is, Forty years. But how much of the tree is forty years, or even thirty years, old? Only a little of it, and that little is near the ground and buried deep in the center of the trunk. The myriad slender twigs, which stretch upward and around in every direction, grew last year. The oldest part of the tree is down near the root; the newest is at the ends of the boughs.

And the blossoms are all on the new wood, the very latest growth. There will

the fruit be found in October. There are no blossoms, there is no fruit, springing from the dry bark of the trunk or of the great branches. Nor will the fragrant blossoms of religious joy grow out of the dry bark of an old experience, through which the sap has ceased to circulate. When the tree ceases to grow there are no more blossoms, no more fruit. Thus, when the Christian ceases to grow, though he may not have wholly cast away his confidence and gone back to his sins, his religious enjoyment declines. Prayer, praise, the Divine word, the assembly of God's people, no longer delight him as they once did. He may still hold on his way after a fashion, and be really a child of God; but he cannot retain the joyous emotions, the anointing oil of gladness, which

belong to a vigorous spiritual life. He may be doing well, but it is certainly possible to do better.

See what heights others have gained. The piety of the saintly Fletcher attracts the wondering eyes of all who love the deep things of God, *and by it, being dead, he yet speaketh*. How full of spiritual power was the daily life of Bramwell!

Other branches of God's Church present their witnesses of the fullness of grace. James Brainard Taylor thus describes his own experience: "Memorable day! The time and the place will never—no, never—be forgotten. I pleaded and wrestled with God; and, praise to his name! after six long years I found what I had so long and so earnestly sought. My earnest desire then was, as it had been ever since I professed religion

six years' before, that all love of the world might be destroyed, all selfishness extirpated, pride banished, unbelief removed, all idols dethroned, every thing hostile to holiness and opposed to the Divine will crucified, that holiness to the Lord might be engraved on my heart. I was enabled in my heart to say, 'Here, Lord, take me, take my whole soul, and seal me thine—thine now, and thine forever. If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' Then ensued such emotions as I never before experienced; all was calm and tranquil, silent, solemn, and a heaven of love pervaded my whole soul. People may call this blessing by what name they please—faith of assurance, holiness, perfect love, sanctification. It makes no difference with me whether they give it a name or no name, it con-

tinues a blessed reality ; and, thanks to my heavenly Father ! it is my privilege to enjoy it. It is yours also."

Dr. Edward Payson describes himself as a resident of Bunyan's land of Beulah, "where the sun always shines and the birds always sing." "The celestial city is full in my view, its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart." He had long been passing through alternate sunshine and cloud ; but now all was light. He wonders that he had not sooner discovered his privilege, and exclaims, "O that I had known this twenty years ago !"

We need not multiply examples. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification.* Praise God for his precious,

present grace, and press on to what lies beyond. *There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed*, and the promises cover every foot of its sacred soil. Like Caleb and Joshua, then, *follow the Lord fully*, and *go up and possess* the goodly heritage.

THE END.

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WE have at last something new and original in the literature of the temperance cause. The treatise is a learned one; but the style is spirited and simple, and so plain that a child may understand it. . . . Happy is that man who can bring to a moral enterprise the re-inforcement of fresh and vigorous ideas. This benediction must rest upon the head of our friend, Dr. J. T. Crane. He comes to the front of the temperance ranks, and offers valuable service at an hour when his new weapon is peculiarly adapted to the result sought. It is a fresh and original form of presenting an old and worn theme, and has been so successfully executed that it will force a hearing from those who, through familiarity with the topic, have ceased to be interested in it. The style is so lively and clear, and the volume is so full of entertaining as well as startling information, that our young people will be sure to read it if it is once placed in their hands.—*Christian Advocate*.

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